

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An electronic shopping system, comprising:

a first network connection between a first merchant computer and a network host computer, said first connection for transmitting product information to said network host computer in accordance with a first type of network connectivity and for transmitting updates to said product information;

a second network connection between a second merchant computer and said network host computer, said second connection for transmitting product information to said network host computer in accordance with a second type of network connectivity and for transmitting updates to said product information;

a database at said network host computer for storing said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer and said updates to product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer;

a first computer program at said network host computer for 1) receiving a search request from a customer computer, said search request comprising a search parameter for searching said database to select product information from said database and 2) assimilating said product information selected according to said search parameter for display in one presentation distinguishing said product information from said first merchant computer from said product information from said second merchant computer;

a second computer program at said network host computer for searching

said database using said search parameter to select product information from the database, said searching performed 1) when said search request is received from said customer computer and 2) when said first merchant computer or said second merchant computer transmits updates to said product information in said database at said network host computer; and

a third network connection between said network host computer and a said customer computer, said third network connection for transmitting said assimilated product information from said network host computer to said customer computer and for transmitting updates to said assimilated product information at said customer computer

wherein said updates to said assimilated product information are transmitted continuously to said customer computer from said network host computer by said first computer program if 4) said customer computer has submitted a request to receive at said customer computer said continuous updates to said assimilated product information responsive to said search request. at said customer computer and 2) said first merchant computer or said second merchant computer transmitted updates to said product information in said database at said network host computer.

2. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein said first network connection and said second network connection further comprises:

a network connection between said first merchant computer and a regional host computer;

a network connection between said second merchant computer and said regional host computer; and

a network connection between said regional host computer and said network host computer, wherein said regional host computer receives said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer and transmits said product information to said network host computer.

3. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein said customer computer utilizes an information management interface to simplify communication between said customer computer and said network host computer.
4. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, further comprising a ~~second~~ third computer program, wherein said customer computer utilizes said ~~second~~ third computer program to further process said assimilated product information.
5. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein said first network connection comprises a switch in communication with said first merchant computer and said network host computer, said switch adapted to assimilate said product information from said first merchant computer and to transfer said product information to said network host computer.
6. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 5 wherein said first network connection is a packet switch network, Ethernet, or modem connection.
7. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1 wherein said second network connection comprises a switch in communication with said second merchant computer and said network host computer, said switch adapted to assimilate said

product information from said second merchant computer and to transfer said product information to said network host computer.

8. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 7 wherein said second network connection is a packet switch network, Ethernet, or modem connection.
9. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 wherein said first type of network connectivity and said second type of network connectivity are selected from the group consisting of TCP/IP, SNA, or X.25 connectivity.
10. (Cancelled)
11. (Currently Amended) A method for electronic shopping, comprising the steps of:

transmitting product information and updates to product information from a first merchant computer to a network host computer in accordance with a first type of network connectivity;

transmitting product information and updates to product information from a second merchant computer to said network host computer in accordance with a second type of network connectivity;

storing said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer in a database;

establishing a network connection between a customer computer and a said network host computer in communication with said database, said customer computer adapted to display information received from said network host computer;

receiving at said network host computer a search request from said customer computer for product information from said database, said search request comprising at least one search parameter for searching said database and selecting product information from said database;

searching said database using said search parameter to select product information relevant to said search request;

assimilating said product information from said database located in accordance with said search request from said customer computer for display in one presentation at said customer computer distinguishing said product information from said first merchant computer from said product information from said second merchant computer;

transmitting from said network host computer to said customer computer said assimilated product information;

displaying said assimilated product information at said customer computer;

determining whether updates to product information from said first merchant computer or said second merchant computer have been received at said network host computer and stored in said database; and

searching said database according to said search parameter to select updated product information relevant to said search request;

assimilating said updated product information from said database selected using said search parameter from said search request;

transmitting from said network host computer to said customer computer

~~said updated updates to said assimilated product information at said customer computer, wherein said updates are assimilated by said host computer and transmitted if 1) said customer computer has requested updates to said assimilated product information and 2) said first merchant computer or said second merchant computer has transmitted updates to said product information in said database; and~~

displaying said updated assimilated product information at said customer computer.

12. (Canceled)
13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein said first type of network connectivity and said second type of network connectivity is selected from the group of TCP/IP, SNA, or X.25 connectivity.
14. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the step of transmitting product information from said first merchant computer comprises the steps of:
 - transmitting said product information from said first merchant computer to a regional host computer; and
 - transmitting said product information from said regional host computer to said network host computer.
15. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the step of transmitting product information from said second merchant computer comprises the steps of:
 - transmitting said product information from said second merchant computer to a regional host computer; and

transmitting said product information from said regional host computer to said network host computer.

16. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the step of transmitting product information from a first merchant computer to a network host computer comprises the steps of:

transmitting product information from said first merchant computer to a switch; and

transmitting said product information from said switch to said network host computer.

17. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein the step of transmitting product information from a second merchant computer to a network host computer comprises the steps of:

transmitting product information from said second merchant computer to a switch; and

transmitting said product information from said switch to said network host computer.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for obtaining real time product information comprising the steps of:

establishing a first network connection between a first merchant computer and a network host computer;

transmitting product information from said first merchant computer to said network host computer;

establishing a second network connection between a second merchant computer and said network host computer;

transmitting product information from said second merchant computer to said network host computer;

storing said product information from said first merchant computer and said second merchant computer in a database;

establishing a connection between said network host computer and a customer computer;

receiving from said customer computer a search request for product information from said ~~customer computer~~ database, said search request comprising at least one search parameter for searching said database;

searching said database using said search parameter to select product information relevant to said search request;

assimilating said product information selected using said search parameter to distinguish said product information from said first merchant computer from said product information from said second merchant computer in response to said search request from said customer computer for product information from said database;

transmitting said assimilated product information to said customer computer;

displaying said assimilated product information at said customer computer;
and

transmitting from said network host computer to said customer computer continuous updates to said assimilated product information at said customer computer wherein said continuous updates are assimilated and transmitted by said network host computer ~~and transmitted if~~

- 1) said customer computer has requested continuous updates to assimilated product information related to said search parameter in said search request for product information; ~~and~~
 - 2) said network host computer determines said first merchant computer or said second merchant computer has transmitted updates to said product information in said database related to said search parameter in said search request for product information.
19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18 wherein the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection comprises the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection in accordance with connectivity selected from the group of TCP/IP, SNA, or X.25 connectivity.
20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 18 wherein the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection comprises the step of establishing said first network connection and said second network connection in accordance with a packet switch network, Ethernet, or modem connection.
21. (Currently Amended) A real time shopping system comprising:

product information from a plurality of merchant computers;

a plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and a host computer, said network connections for uploading said product information to said host computer;

a database at said host computer for storing said product information from said plurality of merchant computers;

a customer computer connected to said host computer for transmitting to said host computer at least one search parameter for selecting product information in said database;

a computer program at said host computer for searching said database using said search parameter from said customer computer and assimilating said product information from said database relevant to said search parameter for display in one presentation distinguishing said product information from said first merchant computer from said product information from said second merchant computer;

~~a connection between~~wherein said host computer ~~and a customer computer, said connection for transmitting~~ 1) transmits to said customer computer said assimilated product information from said database selected according to said search parameter and 2) transmits to said customer computer continuous updates to said assimilated product information from said database selected according to said search parameter, wherein said updates are assimilated by said computer program at said host computer if 1) if said customer computer has

requested continous updates to assimilated product information from said database selected according to said search parameter, and 2) said host computer determines that at least one of said plurality of merchant computers has transmitted to said database an update to product information in said database; and

a display at said customer computer for presenting said assimilated product information and said updates to said assimilated product information, said assimilated product information and said updates to said assimilated product information selected from said database using said search parameter.

22. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21 further comprising a regional host computer, said regional host computer adapted to facilitate said plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and said host computer.
23. (Original) The system of claim 22 wherein said product information is assimilated at said regional host computer.
24. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21 further comprising a switch, said switch adapted to facilitate said plurality of network connections between said plurality of merchant computers and said host computer.
25. (Original) The system of claim 24 wherein said product information is assimilated at said switch.
26. (Original) The system of claim 21 further comprising an information management interface to simplify communication between said customer

computer and said host computer.